

By Judith Valente
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For the past three days, the lives of Jack and Kathleen Griffin have been consumed by an endless series of phone calls.

Twice daily, the Herndon couple calls the State Department, asking each time if anyone there knows whether the Griffin's nine cousins are alive or dead.

The nine cousins, ranging in age from 6 to 35, were all members of the People's Temple cult, and had all followed cult leader Jim Jones to Jonestown, Guyana to build a utopian socialist farm commune in the jungle. On Sunday, 400 people in Jonestown perished in a mass murder-suicide.

Yesterday, the Griffins tried again, and heard another polite, sympathetic voice giving them the same frustrating message.

"They ask for the names (of the relatives) and who's calling. They say 'we don't know anything,' or else, they say 'we'll contact you.' And I'll say, 'Well, who has the names (of the dead)?' And they'll say, 'We don't know, we don't have them.'" Jack Griffin said.

Then, in frustration, they called a newspaper yesterday to see if there had been any published reports of survivors. They had already sent their young daughter out to look for a California newspaper, because an aunt from California had said one of the Griffins' cousins, a 33-year-old, had been mentioned in an article as one of the church members seen carrying a gun.

The Griffins, as the Washington-area branch of their family, have become the focal point of the family's efforts to obtain information about the relatives. And while the one big question remains unanswered—are their relatives dead or alive?—their waiting has become filled with other troubling questions.

The family is Catholic and would like a Catholic burial for their relatives if they are dead. But Kathy Griffin says she is worried that the Catholic Church will refuse to bury her cousins because they are member of another church, and may have taken their own lives.

"I'll have to talk to a priest about it," said Kathy Griffin, who used to baby-sit for some of her cousins who are now unaccounted for in Guyana. Five of the missing are her first cousins and four are second cousins, she said.

And, she says, although the family is hoping against hope that their relatives are alive, they are uncertain about how they will be able to pay the burial costs of nine family members all at once, if they are indeed among the dead.

Meanwhile, the waiting goes on. "It's terrible. One minute I think to myself they're all dead. The next I say maybe they escaped in the jungle."

Mrs. Griffin said her aunt in California read in a paper there that the husband of one of her (cousins) was listed among the dead. Still the Griffins can get no information from the State Department.

"They're very polite when we call. They take the information (the names of the Griffins' cousins). But they're not disseminating any information . . . If 200 people were identified, like the newspapers said, then certainly they have some information by now," said Jack Griffin, a Navy captain stationed at the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

Mrs. Griffin's cousin, Marlene Talley Wheeler, who is about 30 years old now, was the first to join the People's Temple church in San Francisco. Wheeler had moved to San Francisco from the Long Beach, Calif., area in the mid-1960s after she and her three sisters and brothers lost both their parents.

The People's Temple was just around the corner from where Wheeler lived. Griffin said members of the church probably struck her cousin as friendly and out-going. All five members of the orphaned family eventually joined the church in the late 1960s Griffin said. "They had lost their parents and wanted to hold the family together," Mrs. Griffin said.

"They were looking for a church," she added.

When many members of the San Francisco branch of the People's Temple moved to Guyana, Mrs. Griffin's cousins moved, too.

An aunt living in California counseled her young relatives not to join the People's Temple because she found the members "too pushy," Mrs. Griffin said.

The youths joined anyway, and donated \$57,000 they had received from their dead father's fireman's fund to the church, the Griffins said yesterday.

A spokeswoman at the State Department's special operations center set up to take inquiries from relatives of People's Temple members, yesterday said, "If we don't have the names on our known survivors' list, we take the names and cable them to Guyana for possible identification."

Asked if they thought their relatives would return to the People's Temple headquarters in San Francisco, Jack Griffin said, "My God, no."

"We want them to know that there are relatives who care enough about them who will, until they get back on their feet, shelter them, and feed them," he added.

QE2 Cruise Canceled

Reuter

LONDON, Nov. 23—A planned Caribbean cruise by the luxury liner Queen Elizabeth II next month has been canceled because the ship is being repaired, the owners, Cunard, said today. The two-week cruise was due to leave Boston Dec. 3.

Griffins Await Word About 9 in Guyana